Everyday Life Discourses in Kindergarten

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There are two agendas for this article: The first is to reveal what kind of knowledge about cultural formation that might be embedded in examples from everyday life of one-year-olds and staff in kindergarten, concerning meals, outdoor sleeping and organized music activities. The other agenda is a methodological one, claiming discourse analysis to be suitable for illuminating daily practices as representing dominating discourses about kindergarten. This type of analysis is especially appropriate to explore the conditions for cultural formation and to understand what constitutes the meaningfulness of daily activities. It can be helpful for the kindergarten teachers and other staff to become aware of the content of their practice, to be able to discuss what is satisfying and what may need change. Choosing discourse theory, with the French philosopher Michel Foucault and his ideas on discourse, power-knowledge, subject positions and space, as a tool for analysing kindergarten practice may illuminate how "truth patterns", what is taken-for-granted as normal, correct and good, rule the activities, permeate everyday life and make "the inhabitants" act in certain ways and not in others. The conformity of institutions like kindergartens, schools, hospitals and other fields with large groups of people is often unspoken, but nonetheless very efficient in regulating behaviour, because what is considered good, normal and reasonable effectively delimits reflection and action.

Keywords: Kindergarten, one-year-olds, kindergarten staff, cultural formation, discourse analysis, Michel Foucault, everyday life, normality.

Introduction

In this article kindergarten as an arena for cultural formation will be discussed by highlighting three examples from routines and everyday life in a kindergarten[1]. Seemingly insignificant activities are placed on the agenda. Such activities in kindergarten might be loaded with critical knowledge about formatting processes, processes about how kindergarten as an institutional space with its "inhabitants", with its artifacts, its rules, regulations and curricula constitute an arena for cultural formation.

The following three examples represent the framework for the article:

When the one-year-old children see plates and cups being put on the table, they run towards their teacher to help her.

When Peter and his one-year-old mates enter the room where the weekly music session takes place they immediately start to slap their hands on their thighs. Tom, the teacher[2], follows up and sings the welcome song in which the thigh-slapping is an important element, together with the children.

When the teacher registers that it is 11 o'clock, she starts to prepare the children for their daily sleep in their prams in the outdoor area.

The article has two agendas. The first is to reveal what kind of knowledge might be embedded in these examples. The other is a methodological one, claiming discourse analysis to be suitable for illuminating daily practices in kindergarten as representing dominating discourses about kindergarten practice. What can be learned from highlighting details and analyzing them from a discourse theoretical perspective?

The discursive perspective, with use of key concepts from the French philosopher Michel Foucault, will be outlined before the examples are discussed.

A Foucauldian perspective

The theoretical support stems first and foremost from Michel Foucault's work on discourse, discursive space, power-knowledge, truth patterns and self-technologies (Foucault, 1980, 1988). Choosing discourse theory and Foucault's ideas as a theoretical framework for analyzing kindergarten discourses is rather unusual (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 5). More common is the use of socio-cultural perspectives, with activity theory and dialogue perspectives, which might give crucial insight into specific issues concerning the relation between children and adults in kindergarten. Brian Edmiston, drawing mainly on Bakthin, shows, though, in his book how a combination of

"inter-related social constructivist theories of development, imagination and play (Vygotsky 1967; 1978; 1986), post-structural analysis of power relationships (Foucault, 1977; 1978; 1980) in early childhood settings (Dyson, 1997; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Grieshaber and Canella, 2001; Tobin, 1997; 2000; Mac Naughton, 2000;

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[1] In a Norwegian context, kindergarten is an "early years" institution.
[2] The teacher in a Norwegian kindergarten has a bachelor degree specialized in kindergarten education.

2005), as well as social positioning and cultural anthropological analysis of improvisation, agency and identity formation (Davies and Harré, 1990, Harré and Langenhove, 1999; Holland et al., 1998; Holland and Lave, 2001) (Edmiston, 2008, p. 4).

also might provide the research with a rich variety of understandings. What a discourse theoretical perspective highlights, in particular, are questions concerning the "how" in everyday life and the significance of this "how" that makes people act and speak in predictable patterns. One might become aware of the significance of chosen artifacts for play, of staff habits and of rules followed in kindergarten from this social epistemological perspective[3]. Foucault's approach to knowledge about institutions, cultural and personal relations and constructions of identities has been radical in ways of interpreting how knowledge is produced. He claimed that in a discourse there are rules of formation for objects, for concepts and for theories. In interview (Tullgren, 2004, p. 61) he said:

"These are the rules put into operation through a discursive practice at a given moment that explain why a certain thing is seen (or omitted); why it is envisaged under such an aspect and analyzed at such a level; why such a word is employed with such a meaning and in such a sentence."

The rules Foucault talks about are the so-called "regimes of truth", representing the silent consensus about what is right and what is wrong to do, what is good and bad, what is normal and what is not. "Each field of knowledge, such as early childhood studies, health care or social work, expands by developing officially sanctioned truth that govern normal and desirable ways to think, act and feel," writes Mac Naughton (2005, p. 29). When a regulation, a norm or a standard has become normal, no one questions why. They submit to the rules and regulate their practice to what they find normal in this space of area.

"Discourse has a quite specific meaning. It refers to groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. In other words, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it." (Rose, 2007, p. 142).

This is a kind of conformity that regulates institutions like kindergartens, schools, hospitals and other fields where large groups of people should be familiar with the boundaries that exist and delimit what is normal to do and what is expected (Foucault, 1971, 1979). These boundaries might be unspoken, but nonetheless very efficient. Everyone, according to Foucault, regulates their practice in accordance with them. Foucault's work has shown that the consensus within a field establishes a certain power-relation between those in the field; not a power that governs, but a power that makes everyone position oneself to act as if the others have been given a position to act from. But the power does not belong to a person. Power is what arises between people, as a consequence of implementing institutional rules, regulations, curricula. This power is the productive element that makes people act, think and speak in certain ways, and not in others (Foucault, 1972). One might think that it is so only for adults. The examples in this article will support the idea that power regulates everyone in the discourse.

Discourse analysis

Research based on discourse analysis can help reveal how "knowledge" in early childhood is constructed and becomes dominant. Discourse analysis aims to map and examine the content of the discourses in order to analyze the different components, to see the power relations between them, and to learn how power constructs individuals within a space of action to act in some ways and not in others. The purpose of discourse analysis is not necessarily to contribute to the change of a practice, but to unveil it, to make dominant practices visible and demonstrate how things are done within the practice. Foucault describes discourse analysis as an analysis of material practice:

I am not looking underneath discourse for the thought of men, but try to grasp discourse in its manifest existence, as a practice that obeys certain rules — of formation, co-existence — and systems of functioning. It is this practice, in its consistency and almost in its materiality, that I describe. (Tullgren, 2004, p. 58).

The discourse will be possible to map when the researcher, after systematic and thorough review of the empirical material, understands the taken-for-granted premises for action. Several discourses may be active within a field. It is possible to separate one discourse from another when asking questions like: what does not happen here? What is unspoken and what is natural? If the children have different rules of behaviour in different departments of the kindergarten, an assumption would be to examine the rules as components of different discourses, to be able to understand where the boundaries are.

This type of analysis is especially appropriate for illuminating daily practices, to explore the conditions for cultural formation or to understand what it is that constitutes the meaningful daily activities. It can be helpful for the kindergarten teacher and other staff to become aware of the content of a discourse to be able to discuss what is satisfying about the practice and what may need change. An important condition for change could be to introduce various ways to conceptualize cultural formation, e.g. as an ongoing process in every member of the kindergarten society.

This scientific approach will highlight some events and ignore others. Being aware of this fact is crucial, because blind spots in the researcher's empirical material will not be seen. Doing discourse analysis is one perspective from which to produce knowledge, it will seek to highlight taken-for-granted practices as critical, and therefore interesting.

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[3] http://www.hib.no/senter/suf/forskningsprogram/bda/english.asp

Mapping everyday practices

To be able to think discursively as a researcher it is necessary to map discourses as discursive practices, to formulate research questions in ways that make it apparent what "truth patterns" rule the persons studied and what guidelines make them act and speak as they do. Through the mapping, some ways of speaking or ways of being will appear as important, correct and sensible. It involves the meanings that linguistic utterances represent, and the consequences they might have, because the relationship between language and meaning is a driving force that is both a social and a material power.

This is what Foucault describes as power relations — not control power, but the power that constitutes the positions between people (Foucault, 1980). It is a search for the routines and practices that are seldom questioned, because they constitute "good childhood" for the children, the right ways of being in dialogue with the children and the effective and strategic ways of exploiting the possibilities in the curriculum. The staff will most likely during the day discuss practical issues, such as schedules, meal preparations, plans for outdoor activities and so on. Information about daily life and routines are to be found on the billboard, where details about who is doing what and when, often signed by the manager or the kindergarten teacher, are posted. These routines might be understood as the cultural practices that the staff submit to. Such cultural practices can be exemplified by how social patterns between staff and children are unfolded.

Every morning the staff meet the children with a specific approach, as they do when they have outdoor activities, setting the lunch table, playing and drawing with the children and saying goodbye in the afternoon. They conduct these routines in specific ways. To act in accordance with such procedures is to submit to these procedures, which in turn means that you accept them as reference points for daily practice. The challenge for the researcher is to stick to the material and concrete practice, to study these repeated actions again and again, because they will most likely constitute a pattern of habits, ways of speaking, ways of approaching the children and the colleagues. This is precisely where the discourse is and it is possible to identify and label it when these factors emerge as a pattern for the researcher. That is why seemingly insignificant events, like what artifacts that are made available for the children before lunch or how the lunch table is set, hold information about formatting processes that have significant consequences.

Such apparently insignificant events are compounded with information about what the staff hold as true criteria for a good life in kindergarten and the researcher's challenge is to understand how what the staff tell each other and the children, has consequences for how they act. Ways of speaking might function as a disciplinary power and construct specific ways of being to maintain what they hold to be right and wrong.

Foucault calls this disciplinary power governmentality (Foucault, 1972), with consequences for how people relate to themselves, each other and to rules and regulations (Dean, 2006). Confidence in "the truth" exists between people when it is accepted and followed.

Self-technology is another productive concept that might help to understand how the subject uses disciplinary strategies to emerge as competent.

"Technologies of the Self" permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conducts and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection and immortality". (Foucault, 1988, p. 18).

Self-technologies is about how the subject practically, mentally and concretely conforms to, and disciplines itself (Schei & Kruger, 2008). "Via dominating discourses and practices human beings construct themselves as subjects" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 143).

Studying what happens when disagreements arise is useful because the struggling discourses will then appear. The dominating discourse is constituted by that which is accepted as a current norm. Several discourses might circulate in the field at the same time, but they will all struggle for the defining power. Such struggles can occur in subtle ways, such as what is not being reported to the manager of the kindergarten, by not taking responsibility for a specific task or not submitting to what the manager demands.

A mapping of how the staff discuss procedures and room dispositions and also what they specifically say or omit to say can produce knowledge on different levels. It gives insight into how the framework functions and what knowledge "sits in the walls" and make the silent power active. It is efficient and it might be tagged a "majority misunderstanding" because everyone abides by what they believe that all the others do (Schei, 2007, p. 47).To experience requirements that "no one" claims but that "everyone" can experience is a majority misunderstanding. It includes demands and expectations that one includes the others, such as the kindergarten arena, the curricula, the ruling government, the manager of the kindergarten. Such demands might be thought of as internal, because they are the subject's own norms, much like the conscience.

The empirical data

Knowledge that might be embedded in the three examples mentioned in the introduction will now be unfolded. The empirical material consists of 100 hours of observation, field notes of organized and unorganized activities and of interviews with staff from a period of half a year. The research is a part project in a larger research called "Kindergarten as an arena for cultural formation" (Odegaard, 2012).The observation also includes "textual reading" of the homepage, bulletin boards in the different departments and informal con-

versations and formal interviews with the staff. A specific focus has been put on practical issues, like space solutions, available artifacts, the annual cycle and its implementation.

The point of departure was to study the children and their self-staging in everyday life; to examine how the children shaped themselves or how they were being shaped by others in the cultural space of action called kindergarten (Schei, 2010, 2012). A purpose was to explore how teaching in kindergarten unfolds, how it is arranged and how it gives the children a venue to create meaning in (Bjervas, 2011).

The children were observed throughout the day, during morning rituals, eating sessions, reading time, unorganized play, outdoor activities and organized art-related activities. Organized music sessions have been highlighted since this kindergarten has music as a specialty, according to their website. The study became more and more focused around the youngest children, those between one and two years old. The reason for this was that age was one of the criteria for grouping. There were 150 children in total. All those aged 4–6 were placed together in one house, while the 90 children under the age of three had another house. Within this house they put one-year-olds together in groups of ten. Three such groups had shared room for games, but not for eating.

By following up one group with one-year-olds in particular it was possible to narrow down and concentrate also on one single child, Peter, 18 months old. He was open-minded and curious, eager to play and very communicative with his eyes and body language. What were his actions during one day? When did he contact other children? What guidelines were offered him? Such questions were important during the analysis of the empirical material.

Example 1: A discourse about participation

Looking into the first example of this article; a teacher preparing a meal, and Peter and the other one-year-old children running to the kitchen to help her, we learn that it is normal for the children to prepare the meals together with the staff and it is normal for the staff that the children participate. The children are not being served a meal, but implicitly taught without words that participation is necessary and natural. This is the way things are done here. They prepare the meal together, and then they share the meal. They are being taught through action how preparation of a meal can be meaningful (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). Understanding the actions in the kitchen space is to realize that there has been a process of normalization where the little children act as they are being taught. The standard of meal preparation is that the teachers expect the children to contribute, but this is so obvious that the teachers do not have to draw attention of it. The children are disciplined to putting into action this everyday activity of preparing the meal. "Today, established notions of development intersect with 'a new normality of the child' — a child who will be flexible, who is developmentally ready for the uncertainties and oppor-

tunities of the twenty-first century." states Dahlberg and Moss (2005, p. 7).

Considering one-year-old children as capable of setting the table reveals a specific attitude to child development and what they are capable of mastering at age one. Using Foucault; the staff's consensus about what is part of the one-year-old child's development is implicit in this attitude towards the children. The staff bring to life their belief in the children as capable of contributing even if they are young. This is an important element in the new discourse about Norwegian childhood, a perspective on children and childhood that has developed internationally since the 1980s (Korsvold, 2008). Central in new social studies of childhood is a common interest in the child, not as a problem, not as an object, but as itself, not characterized as a one-year-old and therefore vulnerable, but one-year-old and part of society (Bae, u.a.; Bjervas, 2003, 2011).

This discourse constructs a particular understanding of how staff should act and what children should do. The discourse offers the child space to explore, to help and contribute as capable. This stance has an ethical dimension and the staff are challenged in the discourse to act in accordance with the norms of Norwegian childhood.

Example 2: A discourse about musicking as an important activity

Now let us examine the second example, Peter and his mates who start to slap their hands on their thighs when they enter the room where the music activities happen. What could the reason be?

Once or twice a week the one-year-olds are guided into the music room, an exquisitely decorated room with all kinds of instruments. Some instruments are placed on shelves on the wall, other are hidden under carpets. Mats to sit on are placed along two walls that meet in a corner. The room is temporarily split in the middle to surprise the children by bringing out instruments or toys from under a carpet. The teacher Tom is already playing the flute as the children enter the room where he sits in the middle.

The situation where the children enter the room, sit down in the exact place that they sat last time and face Tom, has been observed throughout half a year. When Peter and the other children are seated, they immediately start to slap their thighs looking intensively at Tom. This reciprocal engagement leads to a welcome song. "Ay, ay, Peter is here", Tom sings. Some of the children move their lips, some laugh or smile, but they continue to slap their thighs until every child has got his or her name sung. Now the music session has started.

Their enthusiasm reveals that the situation is meaningful and that the teacher is important to them. They are given the opportunity of sharing music. Tom is self-aware when he teaches music to little children. In an interview he has said that he wants to pass on the joy of musicking, of creating music together, the sensitiveness of beautiful songs and of a music room thoughtfully prepared with the purpose of letting the children delight in it. Tom's intention has a noticeable effect on the chil-

dren when they enter the music room and start the thigh-slapping in time to the song that they know will come. Musicking becomes an instant embodied reaction, it is easy to imagine that the children might remember the song throughout adulthood, at least as a tacit bodily knowledge that becomes activated when they enter a similar situation. Musicking is a concept that stems from Christopher Small and his concern of music as a bodily, meaningful experience (Small, 1998).

This identity work is noticeable for someone aware of the impression that music can make on people. The episode mentioned indicates how important it is that the researcher is conscious of details, such as how the children orient the slaps on their thighs and their body language towards the teacher who has invested time, particular commitment and effort in conveying music to them.

Here we are reminded that what Tom chooses to do in the music sessions will have an impact on the children's everyday life in kindergarten. If Tom had not been aware of the effect of musicking with little children, if he for example was more concerned with himself as a musician and the other adults in the room, or he believed that one-year-olds were too young to perceive such details as text and melody of a song, then this trustful relationship might not exist. There is an asymmetry between an adult and a little child because of age and experience, but the power in the relation between the two parts is here balanced because they seem to trust each other and are concerned about a specific matter: musicking. It is therefore relevant to map a discourse titled "Musicking as an important activity in kindergarten".

The observation referred to is one effect of musicking and it fits well with the homepage of the kindergarten, where the profile is on outdoor activities, art and especially on music. There is coherence between the content of the homepage and the teacher's attitude towards the children.

Example 3: A discourse about rituals
The third example, observing the teachers when putting all the one-year-old children to bed in their outdoor prams for a two-hour nap, is an example of how routines structure daily life in this kindergarten, and how such guidelines make the staff act in accordance with the rules and accept them as good for the children. Whether the rain is pouring down or it is cold and snowing, the children are put to bed outside. Every child here is accustomed to it, so the prams are placed in a long line for the sake of convenience. Outdoor sleeping is never questioned. When one child wakes up, the next follows soon after. The teachers are efficient, targeted and seem satisfied.

This example illustrates on one hand how powerful rules and routines are when they are normalized. They become a norm for this kindergarten and for how routines are regulated. The source of a routine is the actual origin of the power, but when everyone accepts the rule, it has become a truth pattern and the staff act in accordance with it. Disclosing how truth patterns rule activities may contribute to making the staff aware of how power mechanisms permeate everyday life and make them act in certain ways and not in others.

Producing knowledge from discourses

From this review we have addressed three discourses that contribute to the cultural formation of the children:

The children are active participants in the kindergarten society, seeing it natural and normal to prepare the meals together with the staff.

There is coherence between how the kindergarten is presented on the website, as a kindergarten with a strong attachment to music, art and outdoor activities, and the way staff and children have mutual respect for each other.

Outdoor sleeping is not for practical reasons only, but also part of the profile as a kindergarten targeting outdoor activities.

Knowledge about children and staff in kindergarten and their cultural formation may be revealed in examples from everyday life, like how the meals are organized or what cultural activities are offered to the children. Truth patterns emerge from activity plans, daily routines and documents, web presentations of the kindergarten, the schedule and the important dates of the calendar. Disclosing how truth patterns rule activities may contribute to making the staff aware of how power mechanisms permeate everyday life and make people act in certain ways and not in others.

"The growing attention given to kindergartens today is shaped by a dominant discourse", writes Dahlberg and Moss (2005, p. 18).

"It governs our ideas, thoughts and actions through language: in this discourse concepts such as 'early interventions', 'investment in the future', 'child development', 'outcomes', 'quality', 'cost-benefit', 'best practice', 'readiness for school' become natural ways of speaking, as if they were the only ways to think about early childhood services. It offers itself as truth, but it is a product (as is any discourse) of particular power relations that privilege certain perspectives over others." (Ibid).

If we, as researchers, don't ask how children and adult in kindergarten act and speak, we will not be able to reveal underlying reasons and tacit rules that make them act and speak as they do. When for example the annual cycle is presented, it reflects a way to organize and structure the daily routines in the kindergarten. If the manager of the kindergarten makes this plan, he or she has the power of definition. The year is divided into months, weeks, mornings and afternoons, routines and activities. By studying whether and how the activity plan is followed by the staff, important knowledge will arise. If music activities are scheduled weekly as an important activity, it is interesting to see the effects of musicking with the children on a weekly basis. If setting the table should include both children and staff, a study of how such routines are solved is important. Further; routines for rest time is of the same interest if it is scheduled on the annual cycle as a guideline. The plan can be so governing that it is followed without anyone questioning the content. They probably trust the manager.

Another interpretation might be that a kindergarten submits to requirements because it is not normal to oppose its management. If so, there might be an underlying struggle if the staff have not had any influence on the plan. One consequence could be a kindergarten characterized by routines rather than creative solutions.

Both the manager and the staff could benefit from the researcher's mapping of such conditions, in order to improve or make changes to existing practice. It may often be the case that the staff has become blind to their everyday practice and no longer see an appropriate way to make changes and find good solutions. A researcher from the outside can get to see the "blind spots" through field observations over time.

The new knowledge that arises from analyzing discourses may be knowledge production concerning the conditions for children's creativity and how little children are given opportunities to construct their own meaningful everyday life. Everyone who has a role in kindergarten, either as a child, a staff member, or a curriculum maker, is influencing the "kindergarten" arena. The seemingly insignificant conversations that the staff have with each other during the day strongly influence the conditions for cultural formation in the arena. What they talk about, how they approach each other and the children, how they see some things as important and other things as unimportant are all influential. Children create meaning through how they are met.

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Жизнь в детском саду: дискурсы повседневности

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Настоящая статья ставит своей целью, во-первых, выявить те виды знаний о культурном развитии, которые могут скрываться за примерами из повседневной жизни годовалых детей и воспитателей в детском саду — примерами, касающимися питания, сна на открытом воздухе и музыкальных занятий. Во-вторых, найти методологическое обоснование положению о том, что дискурсивный анализ уместно применять для рассмотрения повседневных практик как непосредственно отражающих доминирующие дискурсы о дошкольных учреждениях. Этот тип анализа особенно подходит для исследования условий культурного развития и лучшего понимания процессов смыслопорождения в повседневных действиях. Для тех, кто работает в детском саду, может оказаться полезным разобраться в сути конкретных практик и получить возможность обсудить, что им в них нравится, а что, вероятно, следовало бы изменить. Выбор теории дискурса французского философа Мишеля Фуко (и его идей касательно дискурсов, знания-власти, субъектной позиции и места) в качестве инструмента анализа практик, существующих в дошкольных учреждениях, позволяет распознать, каким образом «версии истины», т. е. то, что считается само собой разумеющимся, нормальным, правильным и хорошим, управляет человеческим поведением, проникает в повседневную жизнь и заставляет людей действовать строго определенным образом. О конформизме таких учреждений, как детские сады, школы, больницы и другие организации, в которых задействованы большие группы людей, почти не говорится, однако они обладают большой эффективностью в плане регуляции поведения, поскольку общепринятые представления о хорошем, нормальном и разумном позволяют успешно ограждать действия от их осмысления.

Ключевые слова: детский сад, годовалые дети, персонал дошкольных учреждений, культурное развитие, дискурсивный анализ, Мишель Фуко, повседневность, нормальность.